

My MIDWEST

MIDWEST AIRLINES • JULY/AUGUST 2008 • PERSONAL COPY

Sonoma County, Calif. (1 1/2 hours from San Francisco)

WHEN: January-February

THE DRAW: Hang out with the winemakers while avoiding the crush

SAMPLE SAVING: The Vineyard Suites at Honor Mansion are \$600 on-season and \$475 off-season.

Everyone wants to come to Sonoma when ripe grapes are harvested and smashed, but if you want to visit the wineries and really have a chance to talk to winemakers about their vintages, the best time to visit is in the off-season.

At **Santa Nella House** (santanellahouse.com; 877-869-9488), a bed-and-breakfast, hosts Betsy Taggart and Bob Reeves will take care of you as if you were a long-lost friend, with homemade pastries and evening wine and cheese offerings. They offer advice on the best area wineries, and their off-season packages focus on romance, biking, canoeing, kayaking, horseback riding and picnics. They also offer super-saver specials year-round, such as Tuesday night free with a three-night stay.

Just outside the center of Healdsburg, **Honor Mansion**

(bonormansion.com; 800-554-4667) has private cottages and suites with hot tubs and vineyard views, and bocce, croquet, basketball and tennis courts are on the grounds. Across the street, visit **Seghesio Family Winery** (seghesio.com), known for zinfandel and pinot noir, and check out their pairing classes.

Other nearby wineries include **Lynmar Estate** (lynmar-winery.com), which has stunning gardens and a blooming chardonnay; **Iron Horse** (ironhorsevineyards.com), known for its sparkling wines and stunning Russian River Valley scenery; **Ridge Vineyards** (ridgewine.com), which boasts world-class grenache and petite sirah; and **Bella Winery** (bellawinery.com), known for its wine caves. For more information on area vineyards, accommodations and restaurants, visit wineroad.com.

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